

ARCHEOLOGICAL FRAUDS

Whittlesey

1876

Anthropological Society
From Elmer R. Rees.

Western Reserve and Northern Ohio

HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

No. 33—NOVEMBER, 1876.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL SC
OF WASHINGTON,

ARCHÆOLOGICAL FRAUDS.

BY COL. CHAS. WHITTLESEY.

Since the publication of our paper No. 9, in February, 1872, on the subject of inscriptions on stone, purporting to be ancient, and to represent alphabetical characters of the era of the mound builders, other such stones have made their appearance. The supply appears to be fully equal to the demand. When the Arab laborers in the excavations at Jerusalem ascertain what relics the explorers want, it is not long before they make their appearance. In England, there was, not long since, a manufacturer of ancient flint arrow points, some of them purporting to be of the era of the glacial drift. The workmen in the gravel pits of Abbeville, and above there in the valley of the Somme, to Amiens, have been accused of fabricating relics to match those of Boucher-de-Perthes, found in the diluvium.

In the United States during the past half century, archæologists have felt an intense interest in the question, whether the mound builders had a written language. Of course, anything resembling letters, purporting to come from an ancient mound, excited universal attention, and imitators soon made their appearance. I propose to notice more fully than heretofore, the efforts of this genus to solve the question of an ancient alphabet in North America.

I do not imagine that exposure will put an end to their operations, so long as there are persons disposed to encourage them. Archæology has now passed from the field of mystery and conjecture, to that of observed facts, constituting a science. However it may be with exuberant theorists, thorough students do not wish to be deceived. They are not prepared to receive suspicious relics merely because they are wonderful, or suspicious in their own predilections. A recent occurrence abroad, has given both a ludicrous and a serious aspect, to the matter of

spurious inscriptions here. In 1847, nearly thirty years since, E. George Squier, the leading archæologist of the United States, after a critical examination of the Grave Creek stone, pronounced it to be a modern fabrication.

Professor Daniel Wilson, whose reputation is well established in Europe and America, came to the same conclusion. In 1859, Dr. E. H. Davis, of Ohio, a life-long student of our relics, sustained the views of Mr. Squier. All these opinions have been widely published in the United States. The archæologists of Europe interested in American antiquities, held a Congress at Nancy, in France, in July, 1875. A dissertation upon this stone was received and published in their proceedings. The writer seems to have convinced the Congress that the inscription is genuine, and was made in letters of the ancient Canaanites, to which reference is made below. At the same meeting a copy of another stone, purporting to have been exhumed from a mound in Licking county, Ohio, was presented and published, but was received with great doubt by the Congress.

On this the characters are partly Hebrew, very imperfectly reproduced, and in part a resemblance to some forms of Syriac and Armenian.

I now give a list of all the engraved stones in the United States which I have seen, or of which there are copies accessible to me, for which there have been advocates in favor of their genuineness, and of their linguistic value.

First—From the Grave Creek mound, of which there will be found below six copies, all different and all purporting to be facsimiles.

Second—Characters engraved upon a quartz ax, sketched by Dr. G. J. Farish for Professor Wilson, who regards them as genuine. Dis-

covered by Dr. Farish near the ocean beach, at Yarnouth Bay, Nova Scotia. (Not engraved.)

Third—A grooved stone ax or maul, first described by the late Dr. John Evans, of Pemberton, New Jersey, reproduced by Dr. Wilson in his "Prehistoric Man," page 412. Engravings of this tool and its inscriptions are given below.

Fourth—The "Holy Stone" of David Wyrick, purporting to have been exhumed by him from the central depression of an ancient circle of earth, near Newark, Licking county, Ohio, June 28th, 1860, now universally regarded as spurious. On this the characters are Hebrew, of the twelfth century, and are easily read. (Not reproduced here).

Fifth—An epitome of the Ten Commandments in the same Hebrew, with an effigy of Moses; taken by Mr. Wyrick from the base of the great stone mound near Jacktown, Licking county, O., in November, 1860. (Spurious, like No. 4, and not reproduced).

Sixth—A stone similar in shape to the Holy Stone, represented to have been taken from a mound in Licking county, O., by David M. Johnson, of Coshocton, O., in 1867, delivered to N. Roe Bradner, M. D., of Philadelphia, and endorsed by the late Dr. Samuel Barlow. (Not reproduced here).

This purports to have been found in a human skull, taken from the same mound as the Ten Commandments.

Seventh—A grooved stone ax, or maul, sent me in 1874 from Butler county, Ohio, about the size of the Pemberton ax, covered with English letters so rude and fresh as to deceive no one versed in antiquities. The purport of this inscription is that in 1689 Captain H. Argill passed there, and secreted two hundred bags of gold near a spring. (Not engraved.)

Eighth—A stone purporting to have been plowed up on the eastern shore of Grand Traverse Bay, Michigan. An imperfect cast of this stone is among the collections of the State of Michigan at the Centennial Exhibition. The original is in the cabinet of the Kent County Institute, Grand Rapids, Michigan; from which by the kindness of M. L. Coffinbury, Esq., one of the Curators, I have obtained a photograph.

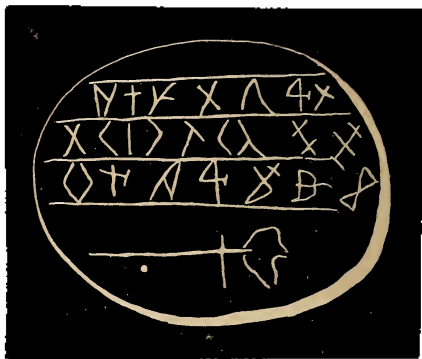
An engraving of this copy will be found below. It is imperfectly executed, probably with a knife, and evidently of recent make, in which Greek, Bardic, and fictitious letters are jumbled together without order.

Ninth—In 1875, a stone maul was discovered in an ancient mine pit near Lake Desor, Isle Royal, Lake Superior, on which were cut several lines that were at first regarded as letters.

The Hon. S. W. Hill, of Marshalville, Mich., who superintended the excavations, has given me a description of this stone and its surroundings, with a drawing which I give in its proper place.

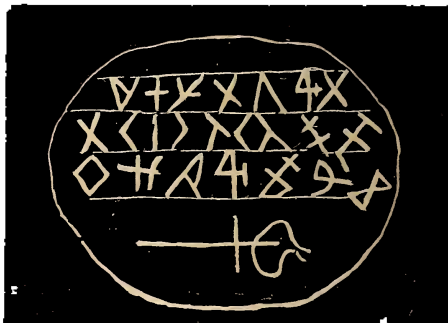
It is evident there was here no attempt at an alphabet. I place it in this list merely as a matter of interest to archaeologists, and with a view to present every ancient thing, which has even a remote resemblance to engraved characters.

COPY OF THE GRAVE CREEK STONE—NO. 1.
BY CAPTAIN EASTMAN, UNITED STATES ARMY.



Captain Seth Eastman was a graduate and teacher of drawing at West Point. He was an accomplished draughtsman and painter detailed by the War Department to furnish the illustrations for "Schoolcraft's Indian Tribes," published by the Government. This copy was made in his official capacity, with the stone before him, and therefore takes the first rank as authority. There are between the lines, twenty-two characters, but one is repeated three times and another twice, leaving only twenty. The figure below, if it has any significance, is undoubtedly pictorial.

COPY NO. 2—FROM THE AMERICAN PIONEER,
MAY, 1843.



This is a sketch by A. B. Boreman for

John S. Williams, editor of the Pioneer. The sixth and seventh characters from the left in the second line are apparently so joined as to represent one.

In that case the number of letters is (19) nineteen. The second letter from the left in the third line is so different from Captain Eastman's that no person would give them the same interpretation.

COPY NO. 3.—USED BY MONSIEUR JOMARD AT PARIS, 1843.



From this copy M. Jomard considered the letters to be Lybian, a language derived from the Phœnician. At the right of the upper line, one is omitted, and another bears no resemblance to the original. The fifth character of the second line is equally defective and objectionable. The second, fifth and sixth of the lower line are little better. In the rude profile of a human face beneath, an eye has been introduced, and the slender cross lines attached to it have assumed the proportions of a dagger or sword. For the linguist or ethnologist this copy is entirely worthless.

COPY NO. 4.—SENT TO PROFESSOR RAFFN, COPENHAGEN, 1843.



This is so imperfect and has so many additions, that it is little better than a burlesque upon the original. No one will be surprised

that the learned Danish antiquarian could find in it no resemblance to the Runic, with which he was thoroughly familiar.



COPY NO. 5.—PROFESSOR DANIEL WILSON'S PRE-HISTORIC MAN, PAGE 409.

This purports to be from an impression of the stone in wax. The differences from Captain Eastman's are similar to those of the American Pioneer, No. 2. Something like an eye, a compressed mouth, and a pointed nose, give it an aspect materially different from either Nos. 1 or 2.—number of separate characters (19) nineteen. Professor Wilson is not a believer in the genuineness of the inscription.

GRAVE CREEK STONE—NO. 6.



The above is the copy used by Monsieur Levy Bing, at the Congress of Nancy (Compte Rendu Tome 1, p. 218).

In the upper line letters 3 and 4, numbering from the left, are joined together, in a manner not seen in any of the other copies.

In the second line, letters 6 and 7 are separated, which in the original are joined.

No. 2 of the third line is so much distorted that it cannot be regarded as a copy, and No. 6 is little more accurate.

The horizontal line below the cross is a fabrication, introduced here for the first time.

The number of single characters, not counting repetitions, is nineteen.

Mons. Bing states that "after different combinations of the twenty-three letters I obtain the following result, that is, eight (8) Canaanite words, having complete sense;

forming a phrase which corresponds admirably with the symbol below the inscription."

"This symbol is a naked sword horizontally directed toward an arc, and supported upon the human head imperfectly designed, which reposes upon two long arms."

"This must represent the idea of Sovereignty and Conquest."

In Roman characters, M. Bing's twenty-three Canaanite letters represent only nine, which he marshals into the eight words as follows: AT—TTGD—TTJ—NGT—LGA—HDQ—AQQ. The translation of which is "What thou sayest, thou dost impose it, thou shinest in impetuous elan, and rapid chamois;" "but in better French:" "Thy orders are laws, thou shinest in thy impetuous elan, and rapid as the chamois." Monsieur Bing then adds: "I not only sustain but justify the authenticity of the twenty-three Canaanite or Phoenician letters, composing the eight words of the Grave Creek inscription." Nothing can be more positive.

In a note on page 224 he adds: "This inscription must be of the third or second century before Christ, and the work of a Phoenician, having resided in Greece a long time; where the Phoenicians themselves were accustomed to write their own language from left to right."

M. Bing is the author of a Canaanite Dictionary, in French, to which he has devoted a large portion of his life. He regards the old Hebrew as derived from the language of ancient Canaan. Nearly all writers who have discussed this relic, find some resemblance in it to the Phoenician.

In 1857, Monsieur Maurice Schwab made the first effort as a translator of this legend, in the *Review Archéologique*, for February of that year. His rendering is as follows: "The Chief of Emigration who reached these places (or this island), has fixed these statutes forever."

M. Schwab was followed by M. Oppert, according to whom it reads thus: "The grave of one who was assassinated here. May God to revenge him strike his murderer, cutting off the hand of his existence." This may not in the closing line be correctly translated from the French, but I have endeavored to make it literal, at the expense of sense and grammar.

Mr. Schoolcraft was a believer in the genuineness of the inscription, relying upon the statements of Mr. Tomlinson the owner, and of Dr. Clemens, of Wheeling, both made in 1838. Mr. Schoolcraft gives the following analysis of what he regards as twenty-two separate characters on the stone: There are in Greek, 4; Etruscan, 4; North Runic, 5; ancient Gaelic, 6; Old Erse, 7; Phoenician, 10; Old British, 16. These

languages have letters in common. There are characters which are found in March's Icelandic grammar, and also several which Dr. Platt, in his history of Staffordshire, England, has shown to be on the ancient British "stick books."

This was the mode of making records on square sticks of wood, in the days of the Druids. Their written or sculptured language was a modified Celtic, of which there are specimens, discovered in Wales. Three of the Grave Creek characters, have been thought to form part of the inscription on Dighton Rock, Rhode Island, and three in the Norse Runic at Kingitorsoak, in Greenland, bearing date A. D. 1032. No one in this country has ventured upon a translation of any of the various copies now before the public.

Mr. Schoolcraft, who accepted the engraving as ancient, and therefore genuine, was inclined to regard it as having some connection with the emigration of Madoc from Wales, in the 12th century, A. D. Monsieur Goppert's translation, to a limited extent, harmonizes with this theory. The age of trees growing upon the mound, indicated the 12th century, as the period of its abandonment by the mound builders. It is evident, however, they had been in occupation many centuries before that time. If Madoc's fleet, and his followers, reached America, and the valley of the Ohio, they found a numerous population already occupying the valley of the Mississippi. Though few in number, and soon absorbed or destroyed by the native race, they could not have forgotten their language, or their mode of making records, by "stick books." But admitting such speculations to have some value, they bring no help to the theory that the mound builders had a written language. If they had, they were in possession of abundant means to perpetuate it. In their mounds there are numerous plates and articles of copper, shell and polished slate, on which they would certainly have engraved letters, if they had them. Their language, both oral and written, must have been in use over large tracts of country, and if put in the form of words, they must have been similar, in all the region extending from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Superior.

The Hon. E. George Squier was the first to call in question the authenticity of this notorious stone, which he did in the second volume of the *Transactions of the American Ethnological Society*. His reasons in general are, that it being conceded not to be pictorial or hieroglyphical, it belongs to some of the ancient and numerous alphabets of which the Phoenician is the early type. Therefore the mound builders had a written language, or this inscription is of European origin.

The latter is within the scope of a possibility. Some sturdy Celt may have crossed the ocean and found his way to the Ohio and become a chief, over whose remains they raised a sepulchral mound. But the first question is whether it is authentic. Dr. Clemens, in his first account of the opening of the mound, makes no mention of this stone. The object of the opening was gain to the proprietor. The owner may himself have been imposed upon. It has no analogy to other inscriptions in North America, purporting to be ancient. Such are the principal difficulties that occurred to Mr. Squier.

On the other side, in addition to the statements of Mr. Tomlinson and Dr. Clemens, I have a letter from Mr. J. E. Wharton, now of Portsmouth, O., dated May 20th, 1876, in which he states that he was present in 1838 while the mound was being opened. The substance of his letter is that he saw Messrs. Clemens and Tomlinson at the time, and they were in the adit, which was being driven at the base of the mound.

After several wheelbarrow-loads of earth had been brought from the vault at the center, in which were bones, beads, mica pipes, etc., among them a small oval stone was discovered, a little more than an inch by an inch and one-half across, on which were three rows of Phœnician letters, but some are partial Runic, and he concludes by saying: "I know there could have been no deception."

Mr. Tomlinson, in a letter to the American Pioneer, received in May, 1843, states that it came from the upper vault about two (2) feet from a skeleton.

None of these gentlemen profess to have seen the stone imbedded in the undisturbed earth of the mound. It was first seen by them on the barrows of shoveled earth, as the workmen brought them out along the adit.

No one questions the sincerity of their belief that it is of the age of the mound itself, but none of them state, or can state, that he saw the stone in its place. Both myself and the late Israel Dille, of Newark, O., saw the first of Wyrick's "Holy Stones" in his hands, at the place where he said he uncovered it, within an hour after he said it was found, and while it was still partially encrusted with earth. It was seen the same afternoon by the Rev. Mr. McCarthy, who read the inscription, and by a number of other citizens of Newark, including the late Dr. J. N. Wilson, all of whom then believed it to be ancient, and have so stated. They conceived Wyrick to be incapable of such a fraud. But when his second find occurred in November of the same year, embracing the ten commandments written in the same

character, they began to be suspicious. Dr. Nichols, who was present, charged him with deception at the time. After his death proofs were found, showing that all the inscriptions were made by him with great labor from an old Hebrew Bible in his possession. Since that time a party in the same region has confessed to the fabrication of more inscribed stones, which may account for the appearance of those which came into the possession of Messrs. Barlow and Bradner.

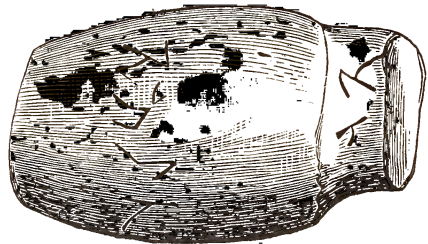
If the Grave Creek find was free from suspicion as to its integrity, it has undergone so many mutations from transcribers and translators, that its value to ethnologists is gone. Before it can be used for scientific purposes, by those who confide in its genuineness they must establish its authenticity. It will not be sufficient for them to assume this, and call upon those who dissent to prove the contrary. The best authorities in the United States have condemned it during many years. The preponderance of proof as well as of probabilities are decidedly against it.

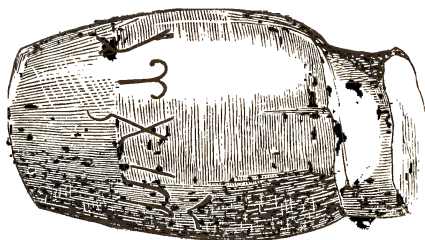
FAC-SIMILE OF ANOTHER ENGRAVED STONE PURPORTING TO BE FROM THE GRAVE CREEK MOUND.



On this there is but one figure that approaches the form of a letter, as represented on the larger stone from the same mound. It is inserted with a view to present in this paper everything within my reach that bears upon the subject of ancient alphabetical characters.

THE NEW JERSEY STONE AX ACCORDING TO WILSON—ONE-THIRD OF NATURE.





These characters are cut in the groove and on the blade, as represented above. They are neither Runic, Scandinavian, nor Anglo-Saxon. It was first described by Dr. John Evans, of Pemberton, N. J., near where it was found, prior to 1859. Dr. E. H. Davis who saw the stone, does not regard the inscription as ancient. The characters had been retouched before he saw them.

The characters inserted below are of the size of nature.

CHARACTERS ON THE PEMBERTON AX—SIZE OF NATURE.

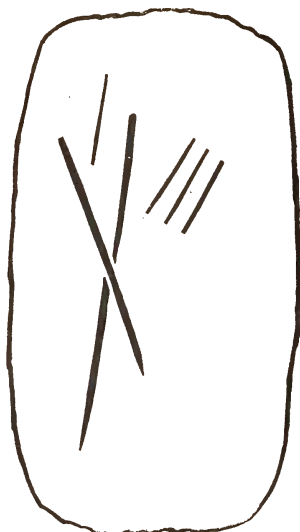


No one competent to judge of the antiquity of these figures saw the stones until after they were injured, by recent scraping and cutting. The most singular feature of the characters, lies in a remote resemblance to those on the Moabite stone. The right hand one in the upper group, if bottom end up-

ward, might represent the K of the Northmen. Those parallel lines at the extreme right of the blade, are common in the pictorial inscriptions of the red men. They may be seen on the "Turkey Foot" rock at the Maumee rapids; on the Newark inscriptions copied by Dr. Salisbury, and on the stone maul from Isle Royal, described by Mr. Hill.

STONE MAUL FROM ISLE ROYAL $\frac{1}{3}$ LINEAR.

In the fall of 1874, Mr. Hill was engaged in clearing out an ancient mine-pit near Lake Desor, on Isle Royal, of Lake Superior. Among the stone mauls, which are always found in the works of the ancient copper miners of Lake Superior, was one on which were marks, which at first view were thought to resemble letters.



Its weight is four pounds, length seven inches, and its mineral composition is a tough hard variety of trap, known on Lake Superior as "greenstone."

Mr. Hill states that he took it from a depth of twelve feet below the surface. It is bruised at both ends by use, but is without a groove around the middle, such as are found on most of the mauls of these ancient miners. They may have held the grooveless ones in the hand, or may have fastened them in a wooden handle. Many others were found in this pit. Trees of the usual size grow over the works, which are of the era of the mounds. The markings on this maul have no significance as alphabetical characters.



FAC SIMILE OF THE STONE FROM GRAND TRAVERSE BAY, MICH.

This cut is inserted as a prevention against its being made the basis of dissertations at home and abroad.

The stone is sand rock, half an inch thick, with both faces flat, and the edges the result of natural cleavage. In texture it is of medium grain, rather gritty, and not very hard. The color is pale reddish brown, inclined to gray, owing to the presence of oxide of iron. Under a magnifier the engraving appears fresh and recent, as though it had been done with a knife, in the hands of one who is far from an expert. The arrangement of the supposed signs or letters is confused and the characters lack individuality. It is not easy to determine which was intended to be the upper side.

Looking over the evidence as it now stands, it may be safely affirmed, as it was twenty years since by Mr. Glidden, that when the Spaniards overran America there was not in the United States, nor had there been, any written or engraved alphabets in use. Nothing has as yet been discovered

that is in advance of the usual pictorial or hieroglyphic mode of making records. The ancient Aztec characters found by Humboldt engraved upon an ax of jade, or chalcedony, in Mexico, were not letters but symbols. These are found in various degrees of perfection all over North America, even among the lowest and rudest people.

A mere collection of letters from various languages is not an alphabet. Words cannot be formed or ideas communicated in that way. When a people adopt the alphabetical signs or another they adopt the general style of the characters, and more often the characters in detail. Such signs had already an arrangement into syllables and words which had a known significance. A jumble of letters from a variety of nations bears internal evidence, that the author did not have an intelligent meaning to convey to others, and did not comprehend the languages from which the letters were selected.

In the case of the Grave Creek stone the various and contradictory attempts to extract a meaning from it, show that it belongs to no rational record of events, and is therefore not yet brought within the scope of historical inscriptions.